

During Deployment Checklist

☐ **Emergency planning**

- Create a financial plan that accounts for emergency expenses and savings plans for any changes in income.
- Compile a list of important contacts such as close family members, friends, military support organizations and medical professionals. Share this list with family members and key individuals who may need it during the deployment.
- Listen to this podcast to hear [where military families can go for emergency assistance](#). Choose safe locations for family members to meet in case they cannot reach one another by phone, and have an emergency kit ready with essential items like clothing, food, water, first-aid supplies, documents and anything needed to sustain the family for at least 72 hours.
- Learn how the [American Red Cross](#) supports military families in times of need.

☐ **Parenting during deployment**

- Offer emotional support, reassurance and a listening ear when needed for children to express their feelings and concerns while a loved one is deployed. Encourage healthy coping strategies like journaling, physical activity or creative outlets.
- Pay attention to any signs of stress, depression or anxiety in children, and seek professional help if needed. Connect with a [confidential counselor](#) to address military life stress and referrals for mental health support as needed. If someone you love is in crisis, contact the [Veterans/Military Crisis Line](#). Dial 988 then press 1 or text 838255, or [chat online with a VA responder](#).
- Create a ritual that connects you and your loved one even when apart to create a sense of togetherness. Create a visual countdown to your return so your children have something tangible to look forward to. This could be a calendar, a jar with slips of

paper or a chain of links they can tear off.

- Hear more about a [network of support](#) that you and your children can turn to during deployment, including friends and loved ones, [school liaisons](#), your local [Military and Family Life Counselors](#), [Sesame Street for Military Families](#) and more.
- Read [how other military spouses handle deployments](#), and [tap into tools](#) for parenting support during deployment.

☐ Personal security and unit to-dos

- Think twice before sharing deployment information on social media or with family or friends.
- Follow [operations security guidelines](#) at all times. It's important that family members and friends also understand these rules and regulations so that everyone can stay safe.
- Read about [security and safety during deployment](#) and share this protocol with family and loved ones.

☐ Reunion and Reintegration Planning

- Talk about your homecoming with loved ones and make plans for how you will celebrate together once reunited.
- Plan for time off after deployment. Taking leave is both an earned benefit and crucial for service members' physical and mental well-being. Whether you take leave at home or your family decides to travel, this break from military obligations allows service members to rest, reintegrate into family and civilian life, and spend time with loved ones. Read more about different types of [military leave and how it works](#).
- Acknowledge the mix of emotions that come with a return from deployment and keep lines of communication open about any concerns and expectations. Be patient and ready to support each other through this adjustment period.

☐ Self-care

- Practice the basics of healthy living by eating nutritious meals, getting enough sleep, exercising, [making time for self-care](#) and connecting with others.
- Know the physical and emotional signs of negative stress and learn how to manage them in a healthy way with these [resources and tools](#).

- Celebrate milestones and accomplishments. [Set personal goals and pursue your interests](#) with Military OneSource [specialty coaching and consultants](#).
- Make time for fun. Explore military [Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs](#) and your [Military and Family Support Center](#) for a variety of activities and events to enjoy while your loved one is deployed.
- Maintain routines and create rituals to help children feel secure and adjust during deployment, as [this spouse has done](#), and tap into tips and suggestions from [Sesame Street for Military Families](#) to cope with deployment stress.
- Download the [Chill Drills app](#) for mindfulness exercises to relax the body and mind.

☐ Staying connected

- Stay in contact with your service member by sending care packages, writing letters, recording videos and creating shared playlists to maintain emotional closeness.
- Make a plan for special dates, provide emotional support and stay updated on each other's lives. Keep conversations positive, and address issues early to prevent them from becoming bigger challenges.
- Be creative with connection for video calls, virtual date nights and shared activities like watching movies or reading books together.
- Keep your bond strong and try [these free tools](#) to help build healthier relationships and stay connected while apart.
- Help children through deployment by keeping them in the communication loop. Show interest in the details of their lives and ask about school, friends, hobbies or any challenges they may be facing. Even small moments of connection help a child or teen feel your presence in their life.

☐ Support groups and community

- Ask for help when you need it, and tell friends and loved ones how to best support you. Hear how other military spouses handle extended deployments by tapping into their friends, family and community.
- Find the right support network for your needs, and don't be afraid to lean on them during difficult times. [Maintain meaningful connections](#) through online and social groups, installation readiness groups, volunteer groups, and your friends and family.
- Contact your [Military and Family Support Center](#) for more information on support programs offered through your installation.

- Read [stories and tips](#) from military spouses who have navigated deployment and military life experiences.

☐ **Talk to someone who gets it**

- Talk out military life stressors with [confidential counseling](#). Call Military OneSource at [800-342-9647](tel:800-342-9647), use [OCONUS dialing options](#) or [log in to start a secure live chat](#).
- Find on-installation confidential counseling support with [Military and Family Life Counselors](#), who can help with financial stressors, relationships, parenting, adjustment difficulties and more.
- Chat with someone who understands the unique experiences of the deployment cycle and military life with [peer-to-peer counseling](#).
- Hear tips to [balance stress and mission success](#) with counseling and self-care practices to disconnect, decompress and transition from the mission to off duty.